

*Sermon Series: Take Five      Take Two: "A Resume"*  
*Genesis 2:1-3, 15; John 15:9-17; Galatians 6:4-10*  
*Salem United Methodist Church*  
*August 3, 2014*  
*Rev. Sue Shorb-Sterling*

Many of us are seeking balance in our life. Our schedules are filled with really important things. And then there is the pressure to be the best at everything! There are days when we just want to scream, "Stop!" This sermon series is to help us refocus on what is most important in our lives, to help us reset our priorities as we discover God's intent for our lives. Last week we talked about the importance of taking Sabbath time, the time for renewal, to reconnect with God and our loved ones. This week we are taking an assessment of who we are and the gifts we have been given.

Each of us is at a different stage of life. Some of us are discerning the career path to take. Some are building careers, while others are in the midst of careers. And still others are retired or unemployed. No matter which stage of life, employed or unemployed, we all work in some way. And for some work can be another four letter word. It takes away our energy, our creativity, and leaves us drained. There are pressures from bosses, struggles with employees and co-workers. Work doesn't always leave us feeling good-usually because we have to work with people who are different from us. They have different views, different talents, different work habits, different attitudes. The people we work with can drive us crazy! Bosses make decisions that impact others negatively. Our co-workers are more like competitors, than teammates. So work can become a four letter word. But it doesn't have to be.

Work is an important aspect of life and it can be a blessing. Work can be a pathway toward life, to becoming the people God created us to be. God created work and gave it to humanity as a gift. We see this in Genesis when God gave Adam the work of caring for the Garden of Eden. He was to till and keep it. God and Adam were to be partners doing the work of the Garden together. But when Adam was disobedient, the breach between God and humanity began. Even so, God continues to call each of us to work, and invites us to partner with God in our work. How does God do this? First, God gives each of us gifts, abilities, and talents to do the work. God gives us passions for work. Frederick Buechner describes our work and God's call as, "*The place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.*" In our deep gladness lies our passion. Our deep gladness lies in using our gifts, abilities, and talents in our work. Our passion could be working for peaceful resolutions, caring for God's creation, helping others learn, creating pathways for others to be healed or made whole, obtaining knowledge that will advance humanity or help humanity remember its past, assisting those in need, protecting others, nurturing others, feeding others, etc. How could we define the world's deep hunger? I think Jesus defines it for us. As being both human and divine, Jesus knows our deep hunger. We hunger for love. This is manifested in yearning for acceptance, building up our egos, doing everything we can to bring attention to ourselves, tearing another down so we can look better. If we look at this hunger from a world point of view, the people of this world are starving for love. We will walk thousands of miles to find safety and love. We shoot rockets and kill hundreds because we do not respect our neighbors. And we conquer other countries to build up our egos.

Humanity is starving for God's love. Jesus being human knew this. He experienced our deep hunger. Jesus being divine understood this deep hunger could only be met by receiving God's perfect love. So Jesus poured out this perfect love onto his world. First, he showed us how to meet humanity's deep hunger by physically feeding the hungry, by accepting those the community rejected, by loving the unlovable and the lovable. The work of Jesus was to create pathways so we could understand how God serves us with love and in turn then we serve others with this same love. He trained his disciples and us to continue to do this very important job. We already have the ability to download this love. We already have the receptacle to receive it and that is the image of God that God placed in humanity at Creation. This is receptacle within us gives us the ability to connect with God's love. It's already in us. And we have the capability to upload this divine love and share it with others because the image of God in one can connect with the image of God in the other. It's like a divine wi-fi networking system of love.

How are we to operate this divine networking system work of love? In our work we are to bear the image of God for another. We are to love and serve others with our work as Christ loved and served us. And, yes, this does take work! It is easier to focus on ourselves, to see others as our competition, our enemies, rather than we seeing ourselves as being on the same team. Imagine a Congress which had both sides of the aisle working together as one team for the best in our nation, rather than protecting an agenda. When we are doing God's work, we recognize that we all on the same team. We are all to be about bringing God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven! This is how we find life in our work. This is how work can be a blessing. It is a struggle, but there are ways in which people are living this out in their work. Here's how.

These folk resist the temptation to see work as a competition, a title, or a paycheck which can make work a burden. They follow Paul's advice from Galatians. They know who they are. They work from their strengths and values. They do their best. They do good by listening to the ideas of others, treating people with dignity, smiling, being mannerly, acknowledging the contributions of others, supporting and empowering others, admitting mistakes, apologizing, realizing they are not the smartest person in the room, and spending time working alongside another. They realize that everybody has something to offer. These are all behaviors that respect the image of God in another. These are all loving behaviors that put another's interest above our own, thinking about what is best for the greater good of all and working for that greater good. This is about serving our co-workers, our customers, our business partners, our bosses, our employees, our potential customers, our family members, our neighbors, our church, our community with excellence. We as followers of Jesus Christ are to serve everyone. Martin Luther King is to have said, *"Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."* This kind of serving creates the place where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. And this energizes our work and renews us.

I read about an example of deep gladness meeting the world's deep hunger this week. It was reported in the Dallas News that people are setting their political and faith differences aside to bring aid to the children who are crossing our borders in Texas. Republicans, Democrats, Muslims, Jews, and Christians of different denominations, including First UMC in Dallas are serving these frightened children by providing language interpretation and legal services to children as well as health care, clothing, and food. They are taking Jesus' words to love one another, to care for the children, and to care for those in need seriously. When I think of the deep gladness that meets the world's deep hunger, I think of Salem. We respond the world's deep hunger in many ways. One way is coming up in a few weeks as we will be offering hospitality to the visitors who are coming to Brookeville's bicentennial on August 30-31. This event is commemorating and celebrating the time when this Quaker village met the deep hunger of the refugees who were fleeing the burning of Washington. Our Quaker neighbors offered them hospitality by opening their homes. During this bicentennial, Salem will be offering hospitality to the many visitors that are expected. We will open the doors of our church to be a sanctuary for those who need to escape the August heat. Our choir room will be the first aid center. We will be selling food and beverages on our front lawn which will also be a resting area. Our Hall will be a place of refuge for the reenactors to escape the crowds. And then on Sunday morning we will worship on the lawn at 9:15 am as we offer thanks for God's hospitality to us as we offer in turn offer hospitality to each other. As God serves us so we are to serve others. As God loves us so we are to love others.

Last week I listed different ways to observe Sabbath time. One of the ways was to make a list, a resume' of values and principles that guide your life: both those you follow and those you would like to follow. I invite you to take Five Minutes today to compile a list, a resume'. Read them out loud. Share them with another. The purpose of this is to help us refocus on God's work and not our own.

**Resources:** *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker's ABC's* by Frederick Buechner; *Sabbath: Remembering the Sacred Rhythm of Rest and Delight* by Wayne Muller; Sermon Series: "W\*\*k-Not Just Another Four Letter Word," from UMChurch of the Resurrection; "Servant leadership: A path to high performance," by Edward D. Hess, Washington Post, April 28, 2013; "Faithful put aside their differences to help migrant youths," By Dianne Solis and Rachel Siegel, Dallas News, July 26, 2014; Carmen McRae-Take Five 1961 with Dave Brubeck quartet, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sNWSr6N72yQ&list=RDsNWSr6N72yQ>;

